

Special Edition: Edgefield County Council Chairman's State of the County Report January 2, 2015

This special edition of the Edgefield County Chairman's Update is a State of the County report. I committed to you that I would continue to communicate the County's activities. This report, just like my other monthly newsletters, is designed to bring information directly to you.

First, nothing the County does is possible without the work of many people. From the County Council, I'd like to thank Vice Chair Genia Blackwell, Rodney Ashcraft and Betty Butler. I look forward to Albert Talbert joining the Team this month. We also owe a debt of gratitude for the County Staff, Department Heads, Elected Officials, employees and our many volunteers who serve on Committees and Boards, all of whom help us move Edgefield County smartly into the future.

I also thank you, the citizens, for your continued input, advice and ideas, which we want to hear.

Putting it in perspective

This report only contains highlights of County-wide work. There are many other achievements we were able to accomplish as a Team. To see them all, I encourage you to go to the County website and read through the minutes for each meeting this year.

Many of the items you'll see in this report stem from the County's Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan represents some bold steps to continue laying the groundwork for Edgefield County's future growth.

One action from last year I want to highlight: We did not raise your taxes, and we have not raised taxes since 2010. That's the kind of action you want to see from us!

Economic Development

Economic Development remains on the front burner. We are continuing to work with existing industries and other new industries.

In August, an Edgefield County industry, Carolina CoverTech, broke ground on a \$1 million-plus expansion. It's another proud moment for Edgefield County as we continue to grow.

Carolina CoverTech, located just down the street from Fox Creek High School, is a contract manufacturer that helps in the development and manufacturing of products that cover, protect, contain and enclose.

This expansion includes adding to their existing building, and they are expected to add a small number of employees and convert some temporary employees into full-time employees.

This expansion speaks well of Edgefield County. They are the third local industry to expand within the past three years, and there are other industries in Edgefield County that have not put out a “press release” on some smaller expansions they’ve done (because of concerns over competitors knowing their business), but I’ve been pleased to talk to plant managers who have overseen their expansions. The good news is that other local industries also have expansion plans on the drawing board.

Also, another part of economic development is being ready for industry to come. You should know Edgefield County is among the leaders in this area as well. Edgefield County was recognized in December as one of 34 counties nationwide that have been certified as Work Ready by the South Carolina Department of Commerce.

This recognition means that our County has met specified workforce and education goals, demonstrating to businesses a strong workforce and commitment to economic growth. To become a South Carolina Work Ready Community, each county has to reach or exceed goals in the following categories: National Career Readiness Certificates (WorkKeys® testing), graduation rates, soft-skills and business support.

Another data point of our continued growth can be seen in our building permits for commercial and residential combined, which are the highest number and value since 2007, coming in at \$25.8 million dollars for the year.

The wood pellet company you’ve seen reported on for a year and a half now is still looking at coming to Edgefield County. The ball is in their court, but the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control issued them an air quality permit last year, so that project is moving along.

Finally, our County’s Economic Development Committee took up the issue of getting our County ready to recruit small businesses and to ensure we had the right land management/development in place. A Subcommittee that studied this topic presented their recommendations to the County Council in December; I expect us to begin deciding what we can do in January.

Recreation

We are just about ready to have the grand opening of the Sweetwater Community Center. It will be a great addition to our County. It provides needed recreation in the fastest-growing area of our County.

In addition, we have improved the County’s Bettis Park in several ways. The most obvious is the addition of a new picnic shelter. This expansion was made possible by a financial gift from Bridgestone. The County matched their donation to create a nice area that can be used by citizens, businesses and industries.

Other Important Work

Some other highlights that are significant and worth noting:

- The County Council approved an architectural firm to help us design and build an animal shelter. We expect to have a new animal shelter completed by late summer;
- We continue to work on revising the ordinance that governs our appointments and other communication with the Edgefield County Hospital Board. You'll be hearing more about that topic as we move through the first quarter of this year;
- We are just about complete revising the Comprehensive Plan, which has to be done every five years. We should complete it in January;
- The County received over \$160,000 in grants in 2014; and
- With the help of the County's Emergency Preparedness Office and Edgefield County Alliance, we have held meetings in every Council District to discuss how citizens can better prepare for winter weather and earthquakes;

Each year I look back at what County Government has accomplished, but we all know there's more to do.

Please let County Council or County Government staff know your opinion on any issue. Together, we can become South Carolina's best place to live and work.

Happy New Year!

Until next time,

Dean Campbell

Did You Receive This Newsletter by Email?

If you didn't, and you want to, go to www.edgefieldcounty.sc.gov, click on the Edgefield County Update link, and provide your email address to receive the Update directly. The distribution list will be updated prior to each publication of the Edgefield County Update. If you received this newsletter and don't want to get it, please reply and let us know that as well, so we can delete your email address.

How This Update Works

As Chairman of Edgefield County Council, I use this newsletter to help explain County issues and try to answer questions from citizens. We will protect the email addresses of those who are interested in receiving this newsletter.

I'd like to send this newsletter to you at least monthly, depending on issues upcoming or ongoing, or if issues need more explanation.

Finally, if you have a question about an issue, please reply to me. I'll be happy to try to answer your question.

